

## Preface

This paper is on profiling, specifically on *language based profiling*, by which I mean any analytic technique for profiling authors of written or spoken text based on their use of language. There are different types of profiling objectives and different ways to approach each. This paper is addressed to the particular profiling objective of reaching a reasonable assessment of the underlying beliefs and intentions of a given writer or speaker which incline him or her to use language in a particular way. Reaching such an assessment ultimately relies on the profiler's intuitions on how a person's beliefs and intentions are reflected in that person's use of language and to what extent they can be inferred from it. In this paper I describe and illustrate a specific approach for doing this which attempts to structure those intuitions.

People routinely make intuitive assessments about a speaker's beliefs and intentions from the way that that speaker uses language. The ability to do this is part of what it means to "understand" a language and is commonly practiced, albeit mostly at an intuitive level in evaluating the beliefs and intentions of individuals one encounters in ordinary life, such as spouses, lovers, salespersons, co-workers, employers, neighbors, and so on. This ability enables people to make routine judgments regarding whether a given writer or speaker is actually knowledgeable about what he purports to be knowledgeable about, whether he is confused, deceptive, honest, confident, whether he actually believes what he is asserting, etc.. This ability varies markedly among individuals and may be the distinguishing feature of certain kinds of mental illness involving skewed mental functioning, such as in certain forms of schizophrenia or autism.

While people routinely make such judgments regarding individuals on the basis of their written or oral text, they typically make them without being aware of the basis and procedures they use in making them. Certain individuals are more skilled in making them than others. Among the more highly skilled we would expect to find those individuals whose professional practice requires that they make such judgments reasonably accurately. This would include negotiators, psychologists, psychiatrists,

lawyers, salespersons, politicians, interviewers, law enforcement investigators, "con men," and so on. But even for individuals practicing in such professions, these judgments are still made in a largely intuitive manner, relying more on experience and "gut feel" than on a "system" of any kind, and would tend to vary from person to person.

The value of systematizing profiling judgments is that it enables the analyst to identify the elements which enter into his profiling judgments regarding the beliefs and intentions of the individual who produced the text, and to re-examine those elements as needed in refining those judgments.

In this paper we describe one particular approach to systematizing intuitive language based profiling. We do not purport that the approach described here is the best way to systematize language based profiling, but has the virtue of being explicit to a degree not attempted in other approaches known to me. The described approach was developed in application to thousands of documents for the purpose of profiling their authors. These included personal and business letters, extortion threats, political speeches, psychological test protocols, self-styled "manifestos" and "white papers" of domestic and foreign political groups, court documents, etc.

The key notion in the proposed approach is that of a *hearer presupposition*, by which we understand an *assumption* made by the hearer (i.e., profiler) about *an utterance (a unit of text) made in a particular context by a particular speaker* regarding the beliefs and/or intentions of that speaker which may have inclined him to make that utterance in that context.

We describe and illustrate the use of hearer presuppositions in profiling applications. In Sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6, we discuss hearer presuppositions in applications to a variety of hypothetical cases; then, in notes 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11, we discuss hearer presuppositions in an extended application of hearer presuppositions to an actual case, the Anthrax Letter sent to Tom Brokaw in September, 2001, shortly after the World Trade Center incident.

While this particular case has been widely discussed in the media for over a decade, it is still of profiling interest inasmuch as the identity of

its author is still open to question and the letter remains enigmatic to this day. For simplicity and for space considerations, we limit our “real-world” applications to this one example which consists of six hand-printed lines.